

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 SSO-00 CCO-00 ISO-00 /011 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:ASHANKLE

APPROVED BY: S/S-O:ASHANKLE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 116050 TOSEC 010013

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO BANGKOK, MANILA, PARIS,
UDORN, CINCPAC, CFR USSAG NKP, DIA AH-3
MAY 19, FROM VIENTIANE RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE S E C R E T VIENTIANE 3494

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, LA

SUBJECT: E&E: US PRESENCE IN LAOS

REF: STATE 114561 (NOTAL)

1. IN CONSIDERING WHAT WE NEED TO DO, WE SHOULD NOT SKEW
THE DISCUSSION BY ASSUMING THE PROBABILITY OF AN EMERGENCY
EVACUATION. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A POSSIBILITY WE HAVE
TO STUDY AND PREPARE FOR AND WE HAVE BEEN DOING SO VIGOR-
OUSLY. HOWEVER, THIS POSSIBILITY SHOULD NOT CONDITION ALL
OUR ACTIONS HERE. IN FACT, WE BELIEVE THAT A GOVERNMENT
EVEN COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY THE PATHET LAO WOULD STILL
WISH TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE USG AND PERMIT
THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF AN EMBASSY WITH A FEW MILITARY
ATTACHES. WE DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE THAT USAID CAN
SURVIVE AS IT HAS EXISTED. THE BIG ISSUE IS WHETHER
THE PATHET LAO WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANY MISSION
REQUIRED BY U.S. LEGISLATION TO SUPERVISE THE AID THAT
THEY WANT. PL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS USIS IS ALSO UNCER-
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TAIN. IN A WORD, VIENTIANE IS NOT SAIGON NOR PHNOM
PENH. WE ARE GOING THROUGH A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD WHICH
IS NECESSARILY UNCERTAIN; WE ARE NOT HEADING TO A
SHOW-DOWN AT HIGH NOON. AND AT SUCH TIMES WE SHOULD

HANDLE OURSELVES WITH DIGNITY.

2. NEVERTHELESS, COUNTRY TEAM DISCUSSED VERY SUBJECT OF REFTEL SATURDAY (THE DAY BEFORE IT WAS RECEIVED), AND CONCLUDED, AS DOES REFTEL THAT VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE PROCEDURE INSTITUTED TWO WEEKS AGO HAD NOT PROVED EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO REDUCE AMERICAN COMMUNITY TO A MANAGEABLE SIZE IN LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS. COUNTRY TEAM ALSO AGREED THAT ALL NECESSARY REDUCTIONS IN U.S. PERSONNEL SHOULD BE DONE BY NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, THE END OF FISCAL YEAR, BY WHICH TIME OUR PRESUMED REDUCTIONS IN AID PROGRAMS (PARTICULARLY MILITARY) MAY BEGIN TO BE FELT IN COUNTRY. THE COUNTRY TEAM, HOWEVER, STRONGLY RECOMMENDS PROCEEDING AS OUTLINED BELOW, EVEN THOUGH WE FULLY RECOGNIZE THAT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY MUST BE CUT BACK MUCH MORE DRASTICALLY THAN WE HAVE DONE SO FAR.

3. SPECIFICALLY, WE BELIEVE IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT WE GIVE APPEARANCE THAT REDUCTIONS OF AMERICAN MISSION AND AID PROGRAMS RESULT FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH PGNU AND NOT SIMPLY FROM UNILATERAL AMERICAN DECISIONS. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE WARNED PRIME MINISTER AND FONMIN THAT CONTINUING INSECURITY WAS CREATING CONDITIONS IN WHICH IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTINUE PROGRAMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN PROVINCES. WE HAVE ALSO RAISED QUESTION OF OB HOSPITALS; WE HAVE PROVIDED PHOUMI WITH SUMMARY OF ALL AID PROGRAMS; AND REQUESTED MEETING WITH HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO REVIEW THESE PROGRAMS. WE REITERATE REQUEST IN VIENTIANE 3464 FOR APPROVAL OF LETTER WHICH I WOULD PROPOSE TO DELIVER TO PRIMIN INFORMING HIM OF OUR DECISION AND PROPOSED PROCEDURE TO CLOSE PROVINCIAL USAID OFFICES. WE HAVE THUS LAID GROUNDWORK FOR SIGNIFICANT AND QUICK REDUCTIONS AND VA THEN PRESENT THEM AS FLOWING FROM POSITIONS-OR LACK OF POSITIONS-TAKEN BY PGNU.

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4. WE HAD ALREADY MADE DECISION TO SEND OUT ALL DEPENDENTS OF PERSONS WITHDRAWN FROM PROVINCES. WE ARE PLANNING TO KEEP TEMPORARILY ONLY AREA COORDINATORS AND AREA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS TO LEAD ADMINISTRATIVE TEAMS WHO WOULD, ACCORDING TO OUR PROPOSAL, CLOSE OUT PROVINCIAL OFFICES. WE ARE STUDYING POSSIBILITIES OF REDUCTIONS THROUGH FUNCTIONS RATHER THAN CATEGORIES, I.E., ALONG WITH PROVINCIAL OFFICES, WE WOULD TERMINATE VIENTIANE SUPPORT ELEMENTS OF THESE FUNCTIONS; AND WE ARE EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSFERRING ALL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT TO UNHCR. IF THIS APPROACH DOES NOT PRODUCE SUFFICIENT CUT-BACK IN SIZE OF MISSION, WE WOULD PROPOSE TO TAKE STEP OF

ASKING DEPENDENTS TO LEAVE. THIS ACTION WOULD BE SHORT OF FORMAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION WITH AUTHORITIES REQUESTED BELOW.

5. MY CONCERN WITH REFTEL PROCEDURE IS TWO-FOLD:

A) IT WILL HAVE AN AIR OF PANIC BECAUSE EVERYONE WILL ASSUME ANOTHER VIETNAM-TYPE SITUATION AND DEPARTURES WILL NECESSARILY FURTHER SOUR CLIMATE HERE, WHICH I CONSIDER A POTENTIAL DANGER TO PERSONAL SAFETY NOT FROM PGNU BUT FROM THIEVERY, VANDALISM AND FRUSTRATION OF FORMER EMPLOYEES, SERVANTS AND ECONOMICALLY HARD-PRESSD LAO; AND

B) WHILE ATTENTION HAS FOCUSED ON GETTING PEOPLE OUT, WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THOSE WHO WILL STAY IN. LIFE AIN'T GOING TO BE THAT JOLLY IN VIENTIANE HENCEFORTH AS SOCIALIST ORDER DESCENDS ON IT, AND WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GENERAL DEMORALIZATION IF WE CAN AVOID IT.

6. THESE POINTS BRING UP AN ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE THAT BOTHERS THE COUNTRY TEAM. WE GATHER THAT THERE IS NO PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED WAY TO SEND DEPENDENTS OUT TO A "SAFE HAVEN" WITH SPECIAL COST-OF-LIVING ALLOWANCE
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UNLESS WE DECLARE, IN EFFECT, AN EMERGENCY. TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY WOULD IMPART TO THE WHOLE EFFORT THE VERY SENSE OF PANIC WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO WARD OFF FOR THREE WEEKS. IT SEEMS TO US THAT STYLE IN SUCH MATTERS IS MOST IMPORTANT AND SHOULD BE GIVEN WEIGHT. WE THEREFORE REQUEST THAT ALL AGENCIES AUTHORIZE SUCH ALLOWANCES FOR DEPENDENTS THAT WE DEEM PRUDENT TO HAVE LEAVE, WITHOUT RPT WITHOUT MAKING THE FORMAL DECLARATION OF AN EMERGENCY. THESE DEPENDENTS WOULD BE TREATED IN THE SAME FASHION AS THOSE WHO MIGHT SUBSEQUENTLY HAVE TO BE ORDERED OUT AS PART OF A FORMALLY DECLARED EMERGENCY EVACUATION EFFORT.

7. IN SUMMARY, WE HAVE ALREADY RECOGNIZED NEED TO ACCELERATE REDUCTION OF MISSION AND HAVE TAKEN MEASURES TO DO THIS. WE ARE URGENTLY STUDYING AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PROCEDURE PROPOSED, BUT WE ARE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH DEPARTMENT ON THE OBJECTIVE, AND WE WILL NOT WASTE TIME IN ACHIEVING IT. WE FULLY UNDERSTAND GROWING DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION FROM HERE; WE HAVE NEVER HAD ANY ILLUSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT.

8. ACTIONS REQUESTED: A) MAY WE INITIATE FORMAL DIS-

CUSSIONS WITH UNHCR HERE IMMEDIATELY ON HIS ASSUMING
RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGUGEES? OR DOES DEPARTMENT PREFER
TODO THIS THROUGH GENEVA? OR SHOULD WE DO IT SIMUL-
TANEOUSLY?

B) IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGE-
MENT
THAT WOULD PERMIT COST-OF-LIVING ALLOWANCES/BEING
PAID TO SEPARATED FAMILIES
WITHOUT DECLARING AN EMER-
GENCY? WE ARE DEALING WITH A CONTINGENCY, NOT AN
EMERGENCY. CHAPMAN UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC 10013, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, EMERGENCY PLANNING, EVACUATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE116050
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: S/S-O:ASHANKLE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750175-0821
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197505102/baaaakaf.tel
Line Count: 177
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: AEMR, PINS, PGOV, PFOR, LA, US
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006